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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RIYADH 000393

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO NEA/ARP FOR HARRIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDI KING SOLIDIFIES BASE WITH EXTENSIONS

REF: A. RIYADH 0356

[B](#). RIYADH 0345

[C](#). RIYADH 0145

[D](#). RIYADH 0042

[E](#). 08 RIYADH 1757

[F](#). 08 RIYADH 1748

Classified By: DCM David Rundell for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

KEY POINTS:

-- (U) Saudi King Abdallah bin Abdulaziz issued two royal decrees February 25 extending the terms of 26 senior officials, including three of the most senior Sudairi princes and six provincial governors.

-- (C) The exception is the royal governor of Jizan Province, whose term ends April 3, and whose appointment was not renewed. The king did not name a replacement for him and also has yet to fill the strategically important governorship of Najran on the Yemeni border. That post has been vacant since the king sacked Prince Mishal bin Saud bin Abdulaziz in November 2008 (Reftel F).

COMMENT:

-- (C) The extensions do not come as a surprise, and reflect the stability generally enjoyed by royals in senior leadership positions, particularly provincial governors. This contrasts with the February 14 appointments which removed or reassigned officials in favor of reform-minded replacements (Reftel A). The powerful Sudairi clan retains senior positions in the Defense and Interior ministries as well as the governorships of Riyadh, Tabuk and the Eastern Province (EP). The extensions shore up the king's power base, allowing him to focus on reforms.

-- (C) The failure to extend the term of Jizan governor HRH Prince Mohamed bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz could signal that his days are numbered, though likely at his own request. The long gap in filling the Najran opening could indicate few qualified takers. Jizan and Najran, both located in the southwestern extreme of the Kingdom near the Saudi-Yemeni border, are critical in the kingdom's fight against terrorism, smuggling and human trafficking. The next governor faces the difficult tasks of securing the border against al-Qaeda infiltrators while repairing relations with the local Ismaili Shi'a population.

-- (C) Sources have told emboffs that the king would offer the Najran job to Eastern Province Deputy Governor HH Prince Jiluwi bin Abdulaziz bin MUSAAD bin Jiluwi, but EP Governor Prince Mohamed bin Fahd (MbF) does not want to lose his highly regarded deputy. The king apparently considers Prince

Jiluwi the best candidate for the Najran job because of his positive rapport with EP Shi'a. The king's son, Prince Turki bin Abdallah, is rumored to be Prince Jiluwi's successor, should he move to Najran. Contacts believe that MbF may get his way and that the king is also considering one of his sons, Prince Mishal bin Abdallah, for the Najran governorship. Prince Jiluwi served as Deputy Governor in Tabuk Province before moving to the same role in Eastern Province in 2004. The king extended his term in April 2008.

END KEY POINTS AND COMMENT.

THREE KEY SUDAIRIS

¶1. (C) Three high-profile members of the Sudairi clan, a subset of the extended Saudi royal family, received routine extensions. The term "Sudairi Seven" refers to the seven full brothers born to King Abdulaziz and Princess Hessa bint Ahmed al-Sudairi. The Sudairi Seven became six with King Fahd's 2005 death.

-- HRH Prince Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Deputy Minister of Defense and Aviation (MoDA): One of the Sudairi Seven, Prince Abdulrahman has held this position since 1982 working for his brother, Crown Prince Sultan. Prince Abdulrahman traditionally has not engaged in MoDA's operations. However, he reportedly has increased the frequency of office visits, and some speculate he could succeed his ailing brother as minister.

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-- HRH Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Governor of Riyadh Province: Many local observers consider the active Prince Salman a favorite to one day become Crown Prince. Born in 1936, Prince Salman is another member of the Sudairi Seven. He has ruled Riyadh province since 1963. (Reftel C)

-- HRH Prince Ahmad bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Deputy Minister of Interior: The third Sudairi Seven member to be extended, Prince Ahmad serves behind his more powerful brother, Prince Nayef, and yields day-to-day operations of MoI to influential nephew Mohamed bin Nayef. He has held the Deputy Minister position since 1978.

GOVERNORSHIPS: FOUR MORE YEARS

¶2. (C) In addition to Prince Salman in Riyadh, five other provinces saw their governors extended. In all, the February 25 appointments include six of seven governors whose four-year terms were set to expire in April and May.

-- HRH Prince Mohamed bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Governor of Eastern Province: The oldest living son of the late king, Prince Mohamed bin Fahd (MbF) has governed Eastern Province (EP) since 1985. Most Saudi Shi'a live in EP, and some Sunnis view MbF's role as keeping a thumb on this minority. In turn, many EP Shi'a hold dim views of MbF, some accusing him of corruption. (Reftel D)

-- HRH Prince Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Governor of Tabuk Province: Prince Fahd is the second oldest son of Crown Prince Sultan. He has governed this remote northern region since 1987.

-- HRH Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Governor of Qassim Province: A member of the Allegiance Council, Prince Faisal is considered close to King Abdallah and has governed the conservative Qassim region since 1992.

-- HRH Prince Mohamed bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Governor of al-Baha Province: Prince Mohamed, the eldest

sone of King Saud, was born in 1934. He has governed this western coastal province since 1987.

-- HH Prince Abdallah bin Abdulaziz bin Mousaed bin Jiluwi, Governor of Northern Border province: Renown for his long tenure, Prince Abdallah was born in 1931 and is the only surviving governor appointed by King Abdulaziz (d. 1953). His younger brother, Prince Jiluwi, is deputy governor of Eastern Province (see comment). The Jiluwi are a cadet branch of the al-Saud.

MORE MINISTERIAL POSITIONS

13. (C) The February 25 decrees extended five other ministerial assignments. These carry the same rank, but less authority, than the above eight positions.

-- HRH Prince Badr bin Abdulaziz al-Saud extends as Deputy Commander of the National Guard: While King Abdallah bin Abdulaziz commands the Saudi Arabia National Guard (SANG), his son Prince Miteb bin Abdallah effectively runs the organization. Prince Badr holds the title of deputy commander, but not the responsibility. However, his son, HRH Prince Fahd bin Badr bin Abdulaziz, is governor of al-Jouf province.

-- HH Prince Fahd bin Abdallah bin Mohamed al-Saud, Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation for Civil Aviation Affairs.

-- Sheikh Rashid bin Saleh bin Khineen, Advisor to the Royal Court.

-- Sheikh Nasser bin Abdulaziz al-Shethri, Advisor to the Royal Court.

-- Abdulrahman bin Mohaman al-Sadhan, Secretary General of the Cabinet.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES

14. (C) Thirteen officials at the "Excellent" rank, including

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two royals, received extensions. Of note:

-- HRH Prince Mohamed bin Saad bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Advisor to the Ministry of Interior: Prince Mohamed is a member of the Allegiance Council. (Reftel E)

-- HRH Prince Turki bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Assistant Minister of Culture and Information: Another son of the Crown Prince, Turki now reports to the new Minister Abdulaziz Khoja (Reftel B), a King Abdallah loyalist as are the new ministers of Health and Education.

-- HH Prince Dr. Abdulaziz bin Mohamed bin Ayaf al-Miqren, Mayor of Riyadh city.

-- Dr. Abdulrahman bin Ibrahim al-Jammaz, Advisor to the Ministry of Interior: Dr. Abdulrahman serves as close advisor to Minister of Interior Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz.

-- Fahd bin Abdulaziz bin Muammar, Governor of al-Taif Province. This position is a sub-governorship falling under the greater Mecca governorate.

-- Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al-Hussein, Mayor of al-Medina city.

-- Deif Allah bin Ayiesh bin Faris al-Otaibi, Mayor of the Eastern Region. This position falls under the direction of Eastern Province Governor Mohamed bin Fahd (para 2).

-- Dr. Abdulaziz bin Saqr al-Ghamdi, President of Naif Arab University for Security Studies (NAUSS). A graduate of Michigan State, Dr. Abdulaziz has taken initiative to increase contact and cooperation between his institution and the Embassy.

FRAKER